



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *109th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Thursday, March 10, 2005

Senate

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I came to the floor today to talk about bankruptcy reform and the need to enact legislation dealing with bankruptcy reform. Before I do that, given the comments of our esteemed leaders, Senator Byrd and Senator Hatch, I feel compelled to say something first with respect to judicial nominations.

This 109th Congress, in my view, has begun with much promise. We have taken steps to begin to restore a sense of balance in our legal systems--the system of civil justice to make sure that little people harmed by big companies have a chance to band together and be made whole, and at the same time make sure that companies defended in class action lawsuits have a fair trial in a court where the deck is not stacked against them.

We are on the verge of passing significant and needed bankruptcy reform legislation. A conference on energy policy is taking place that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, which has the promise also of increasing our reliance on renewable forms of energy and cleaning up our air, reducing sulfur dioxide emissions, nitrogen dioxide, mercury, and even carbon dioxide.

We have just reported out of the Finance Committee legislation that will better ensure that work pays more than welfare to help people make that transition from welfare to work. We are close to consensus on

overhauling our postal system and taking the 1970s model created under the leadership of Senator Stevens--who has joined us on the floor--to bring that into the 21st century.

There is much promise. There is much that can be done and ought to be done.

I fear that we are approaching a precipice that we may fall off--both parties, Democrats and Republicans--which is going to render us unable to achieve what I think would be a very fruitful session in this Congress. Reason must prevail here. Democrats will not always be in the minority; the Republicans will not always be in the majority; Republicans will not always hold the White House. We have to figure out some way to work through our divisions on the nomination of judges.

It is sort of ironic in the first term of President Bush's administration that 95 percent of his nominees were approved, compared to President Clinton's success rate of about 80 percent over the 8 years he served.

We need to be able to establish a system of checks and balances. We don't want to be obstructionists; we don't want one party to basically call the shots in the executive and legislative branches, and stack the decks in our courts.

I encourage our leaders, as I have done privately, Senator Reid and Senator Frist, to

sit down--if they have done it, to do so
again--and have a heart to heart.

I urge colleagues on both sides of the aisle
who want this place to work, who want us to
do the people's business, to work and find a
way out of this bind.